

UNDESA/DPIDG/PMCDU: Webinar Series
Effective Governance and the Quintet of Change for the Implementation
of the Sustainable Development Goals
Webinar 2

Wednesday, 29 May 2024 – 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. NY Time

**SDGs and the importance of building
capacity in 'Socially Conscious
Leadership' (SCL) values in Public
Service**

By

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Webinar 2: Innovation and Digital Government: the Importance of Leadership and Inclusiveness in Public administration

1. What are some of the good practices around digital government and innovation in public service delivery? What type of strategies have been more successful?
2. ***What are some of the key mindsets needed for the public sector to adopt emerging technologies such as AI for enhanced public service delivery? What are some of the best practices?***
3. What role do training institutions and human resource departments play in equipping the public sector to navigate the challenges of digitalization?

Mindset changes and SDGs

“Change should be value-driven and institutionalized across all government levels and society with the aim of supporting the implementation of the SDGs.” *The Webinar Information Booklet*

Issues for discussion/Presentation Framework:

- 1. SDGs and mindset issue**
- 2. Defining and conceptualizing the SDGs and imperatives of mindset change – the innovation**
- 3. Institutionalization of SDGs oriented mindset change**

SDGs: Redefining/Reconceptualizing 'Development'

- **SDGs imply re-conceptualizing “Development” from economic to equitable and sustainable advancement of societies meaning economic, social, environmental and moral advancement of societies in a balanced and interlinking manner**
- ✓ **SDGs are a mandate for formation of “Good Societies”** (Ref: “Putting ‘Good Society’ Ahead of Growth and/or ‘Development’: Overcoming Neoliberalism's Growth Trap and its Costly Consequences” by M. Adil Khan: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/sd.1572>)
- ✓ **Key Emphasis SDGs: ‘No one left behind’ - Inclusiveness**
“serve the underserved, rural, physically disconnected, and marginalized groups”
- **Implications**
- ✓ **Innovations** are needed to operationalize SDGs

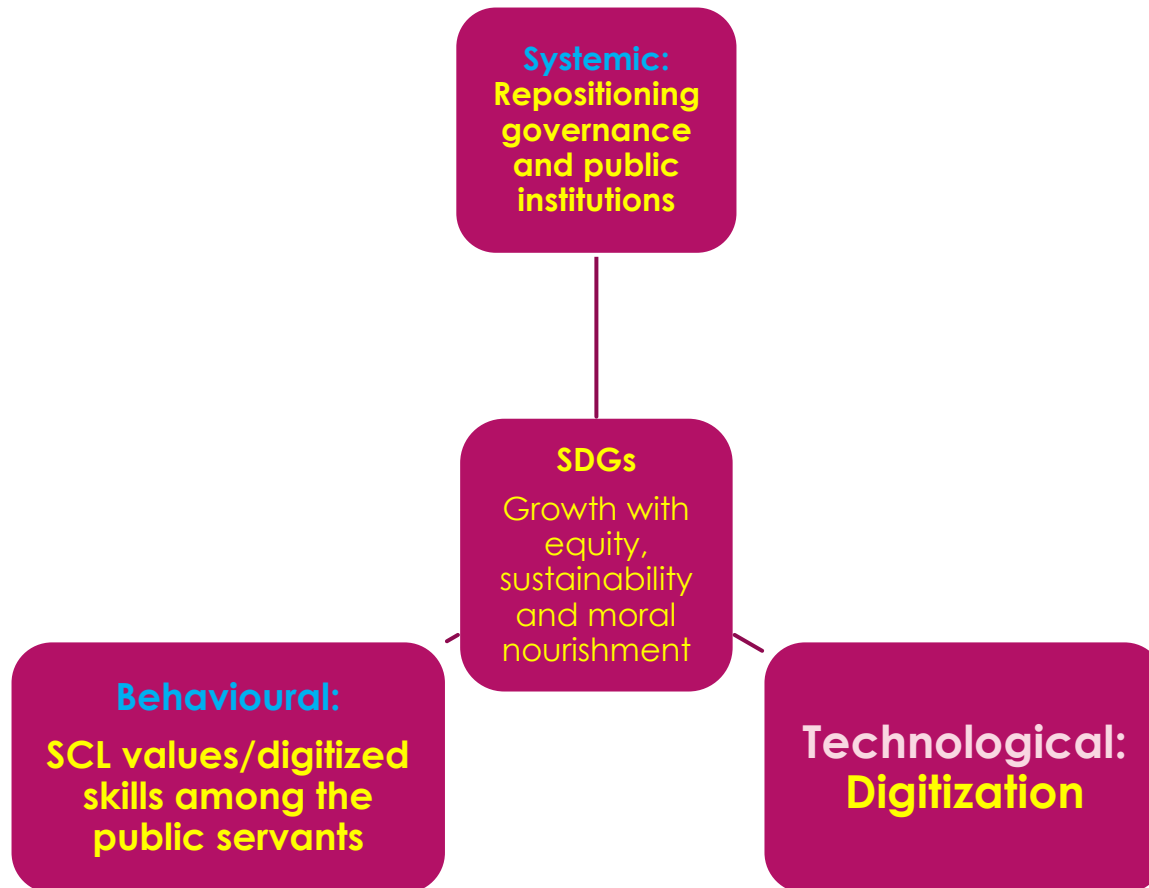
Defining Innovations

Innovation is defined as the process of bringing about new ideas, methods, products, services, or solutions that have the potential to have significant positive impact and value on an existing practice, products and services.

Innovations can happen at any one or all these levels:

- Systemic
- Behavioral
- Technological

SDGs and Innovations: a theoretical framework



SDGs and the backdrop of mindset' change

THE GLOBALIZED WORLD IS A RICHER WORLD

- **Embrace of neoliberalism as the overriding economic policy has produced impressive economic growth right across the board – so, why change**
- **Furthermore, 2000-2015 MDGs that targeted the developing countries have had some successes - so why not simply extend the tenure of MDGs and keep on working on those goals?**

HOWEVER,

- ✓ **Current world is beset with the rising phenomenon of inequality, corruption, social exclusion, entrenched poverty, 'rotating poverty', the phenomenon of 'job poor' etc.; increased climate change risks and these are no more confined within few countries but are global**
- ✓ **Neoliberalism has also promoted new kind of institutions and new leadership mindsets that have given GDP priority over social, moral and environmental goals of societies which are increasingly shrinking democratic space and citizens engagement in public governance**

THESE CHALLENGES HAVE PROMPTED LAUNCHING OF THE SDGs 2015-2030, TO RE-THINK 'DEVELOPMENT'

SDGs: A Transformative Development idea

SDGs

- ✓ **The 17 goals of SDGs go beyond the economic and many suggest that these goals are not mere 'developmental' measurable in GDP terms, rather**
- ✓ **The SDGs are transformative goals in the sense that:**
 - ❖ **Focus of development has shifted from economy to people, society, culture and environment where economic growth is to complement and not override the goals nurturing of people, societies and the environment**
 - ❖ **In essence SDGs are about changing the mindset of 'development' from the current consumerist/materialist model to the formation of equal, empathizing and sustainable societies, the 'Good Societies', within and across nations especially among the public servants, the key drivers of development**

Focus of my
presentation:

**SDGs oriented Mindset
Change:**

**Building New
Leadership Values in
the public service**



A QUOTE

“My greatest challenge has been to change the **mindset** of people. Mindsets play strange tricks on us. We see things the way our **minds** have instructed our eyes to see. “

Nobel Laureate Professor Mohammed Yunus



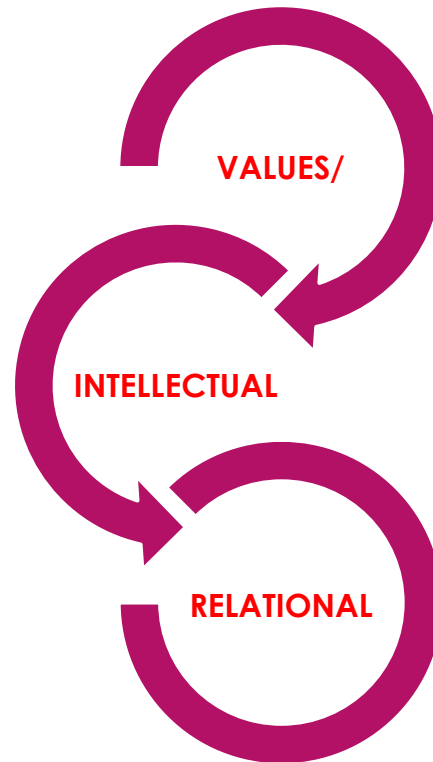
Defining 'mindset'

- In decision theory and general systems theory, a **mindset** is a set of assumptions, methods, or notations held by one or more people or groups of people.
- A **mindset** can also be seen as a person's world view or philosophy of life, attitudes, norms and values.

Mindset dimensions and factors that shape mindsets

MINDSET DIMENSIONS	FACTORS THAT SHAPE/INFLUENCE MINDSETS
Values, attitudes, norms	Parenting, early education, culture, religion, tradition etc.
World views/intellectual	Higher Education/External exposure, interactions and knowledge orientations
Relational/Operating	Societal Norms/Governing Frameworks/Governance Characteristics

MINDSET DIMENSIONS ARE INTERLINKED



Factors that influence mindsets of the **public servants** most

- **Intellectual mindset**

- ✓ Is formed through education/information exchange/interactions with people and through ideas and thoughts acquired, within the country and from outside and these at the end form mindsets concerning:

- ❖ Vision of development, policies, plans, strategies

- ❖ Ways of doing business etc.

- **Relational mindset** (within the government and specially between the government/public servants and the citizen} is determined and guided by

- ❖ *The governing arrangements and/or government's operating arrangements that either grow from within and/or operate as variants of past legacies such as colonial administration;*

- ❖ *can also get influenced by the contemporary globally transmitted thoughts, ideas and dynamics and/or both*

Existing **Intellectual** and **Relational** mindsets are inter-linked, one influences the other and determine the governing arrangements, development vision, service delivery

Current predominant governing frameworks and mindsets

Post-colonial legacies and governing frameworks: relevant mainly to developing nations

- In developing countries, most public governance systems and institutions are colonial legacies where post-independence bureaucratic structures have remained vastly unaltered and mindsets of the public servants also remained more or less the same – mindsets are more controlling than facilitating, serving
- International financial institutions/aid agencies that have been channeling resources through these structures have strengthened the status quo of hierarchical public governance systems promoting a notion of elitisms among the public servants
- Inequities, weak public accountability, deepened ineptness and inefficiencies and corruption entrenched at the structural level

Post-globalization dynamics/Neoliberalism and governing frameworks (1980s onward): All nations

- New Opportunities
- Spurred by globalization, increased flow of cross-border resources has stimulated growth and reduced poverty in some countries
- ICT has opened up opportunities for connectivity and delivering services more cost-effectively and enhance accountability
- However, embrace of neoliberal economic policies as the strategy of growth seems to have also empowered corporations and emerged as the single most powerful entity influencing policies and also public governance arrangements and processes, not just in the developing but also in the developed countries, shrinking space for citizens in policies
- ✓ Trust in government falling and gap between policy expectations and actual policies has widened
- ✓ Democracy faltering

Current predominant governing frameworks and mindsets in public service

- **Norms, Behaviour**

Elitist, patronising, condescending, indifferent

- **Intellectual**

Foreign/borrowed/alien world view, sometime inimical to local culture and needs; subversion of local traditions and practices, in favour of foreign culture, norms and behaviour

- **Relational**

Disengaging, controlling, aloof, pretentious, no/inadequate sense of accountability, antipathetic

Mindset change in public service – Building capacities in Socially Conscious Leadership (SCL) values

Value shift and the idea of SCL

- Mindset change/re-orientation of public servants, policy makers and politicians must be “value driven” and is key to initiating changes that are transformational and conducive to the implementation of SDGs
- During my time at the UN, we conducted a global survey on governance and development that revealed that in societies that experienced pro-people changes, have/had a certain kind of leaders who demonstrated the values of ‘social consciousness’ and adopted policies and programmes that contributed to wellbeing of citizens, equitably
- We called them **Socially Conscious Leaders (SCL)**
- ✓ After I retired from the UN, I continued to pursue the work on SCL at the University of Queensland, Australia where I currently work

UQ's 3-stage research project on SCLs: Stage 1

I continued with my work on SCL and assigned the project to a group of CAPSTONE students (Group Exercise)

STAGE 1

Define SCL:

- ✓ **Socially conscious leaders (SCL) are those**
 - **who demonstrate the values of empathy and/or willingness to address social challenges;**
 - **by immersing themselves into the challenges the deprived and the disadvantaged people face, spend time to diagnose and articulate challenges and issues and develop solutions and policies and**
 - **initiate actions and promote changes that are transformational, universal and of lasting value**

UQ's 3-stage research on SCLs: Stage 2

STAGE 2

SCL Research framework and methodology

Based on the definition of SCLs, we selected few SCLs; researched their works, initiatives and results, mainly to understand:

- What motivated them?
- What visions of change they conceptualized and why?
- How did they go about implementing their visions?
- What results did they achieve?
- What lessons can we derive from their work and more importantly, what generic elements can we draw to assist capacity building in SCL values?

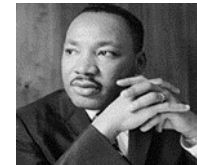
UQ's 3-stage research on SCLs: Stage 3

STAGE 3

- 5 SCLs selected
- One full semester was devoted to the research
- Students produced a comprehensive report with their findings that were quite revealing
- The findings also provided enough materials to design course on capacity building in SCL values

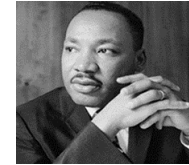
5 SCLs

- Professor Mohammed Yunus
- His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Former King of Bhutan
- Martin Luther King
- Nelson Mandela
- Wangari Maathai

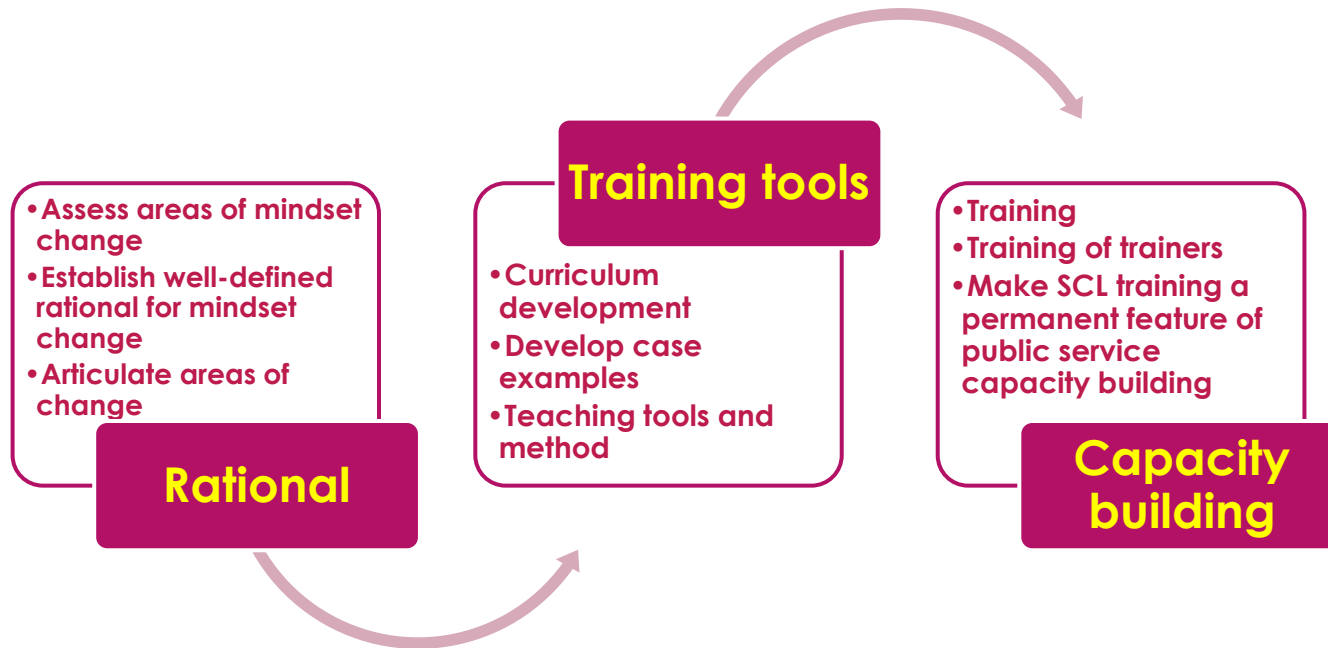


Findings: Key attributes of SCL

- **Empathizing/Social consciousness:** SCLs empathize with social injustices and visualize and conceptualize the framework for change and take actions to realize change
- **Out-of-box thinking and innovating:** SCLs think out of box and are innovators
- **Risk-taking, implementing, learning-by-doing:** SCLs are risk-takers
- **Transformational:** SCLs initiate changes that are transformational
- **Exemplars/Universal:** SCLs initiate changes that can be exemplars for others and thus are also leaders in universally replicable innovations/changes
- **Must possess and/or engage relevant technical skills/mobilise and motivate teams to convert vision into policies/implementation:** SCLs require and/or mobilize relevant technical skills to convert visions into policies
- **Solutions are simple and local:** Most solutions are simple and are from within and not outside



Capacity Building in SCL values/Mindset Change: Framework for training



Can training in SCL help changing mindset and promote socially conscious leadership values among the trainees?

Yes, it can. Here are the excerpts from the UQ students who took part in the SCL project:

- Neoliberal ideals are pervading the decisions, processes and norms of modern leadership, which plays a significant role in shaping economic and socio-political systems
- SCL values promote effective leadership through the embodiment of socially conscious ideals.
- The key elements of SCL include transformational leadership, empathy, risk-taking behaviour and universal values
- **“By participating in the SCL project we feel we have grown as socially conscious researchers and more importantly, “socially conscious members of society”. – Capstone Students**

Realizing SDGs through Capacity Building in SCL Mindset: Key Lessons

- Capacity building in SCL values of public servants must start right from the time they join the service;
- Training in SCL capacity building must go hand in hand with reform in governing arrangements and decision-making processes which must be made truly participatory, as a norm and not as ad hoc opportunistic arrangements;
- Establish policy frameworks that reflect SDGs in concrete and measurable terms
- Role of **spirituality** and **drawing lessons** from local traditions and culture also have the capacity to build SCL values/ change mindsets and orient institutions to SDGs values and practices – the African culture of **UBUNTU**, for example



I am about to finish but before
I do that...

- I wish to emphasize that SCL values does not have to be the monopoly of big guys – the ministers, secretary general etc. etc.
- An example from **India** reveals that you don't have to be a big guy to be an SCL, these values can be at any level at any place

See the picture below

The woman in uniform is Ms. Shrestha Thakur, a junior police officer in Bulandshar, UP, India. She is seen here confronting and later jailing five local ruling party leaders for traffic offences – what followed since is instructive:



This is what Ms. Shrestha Thakur
said



“A lamp spreads its light wherever it goes, it
does not have an address”- Shrestha
Thakur

THANK YOU

